

**TO:** Jonathan Kanipe, Town Manager, Board of Commissioners

**DATE:** 29 December 2021

**FROM:** Biltmore Forest Planning Commission

**SUBJECT:** Executive Summary – Fall 2021 Resident Survey

An online and paper survey of Biltmore Forest residents was completed between Oct 30 and Dec 13, 2021 in order to guide the Planning Commission in making recommendations for long term goals to the Board of Commissioners. A total of 238 households responded, which is considered to be an excellent sample of the approximately 650 households in Biltmore Forest.

**RESULTS:**

1. The weighted Overall Satisfaction Rating was **84**, which is outstanding and in line with results from past research conducted among residents. The rating scale was a standard Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair and Poor Scale.
2. Residents were asked to rate a series of attributes on the same scale. The weighted results are below:

<b>Attribute (How would you rate Biltmore Forest for being a Town...)</b>	<b>Weighted Average</b>
... that protects mature trees and the tree canopy	<b>74</b>
... where it is safe to walk	<b>66*</b>
... that you are proud to live in	<b>89</b>
... that has a professional/competent Police Force	<b>93</b>
... that has a professional/competent Public Works Dept.	<b>93</b>
... that gives you confidence that Zoning Ordinances are consistently enforced	<b>66*</b>
... where there are plans to guide future development	<b>64*</b>
... where there are appropriate Parks to use and enjoy	<b>76</b>
... that is enjoyable for people of all ages	<b>80</b>
... that has effective speed management	<b>69*</b>
... where there are Social activities	<b>68</b>
... where there are guidelines for buffering between neighbors and high traffic zones	<b>63*</b>
<b>Overall Average Rating for all attributes</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>*...a significant number of residents rated this attribute Fair or Poor</b>	

3. Residents were then asked to answer a hypothetical question about directions the Town could take on a series of possible actions.

<b>Rating</b>	<b>I'd like MORE of this %</b>	<b>Current Level is Adequate %</b>	<b>I'd like LESS of this %</b>
<b>Walking Trails within existing Parks</b>	<b>56</b>	41	3
<b>Enforcement of Zoning Ordinances</b>	34	59	6
<b>Speed Humps</b>	21	53	26
<b>Upgrading Park Activity Structures for Children</b>	40	56	4
<b>Enforcement of Speeding</b>	31	66	2
<b>New Planting of Hardwood Trees (Oak, Maple, Walnut, etc) along Roads</b>	<b>64</b>	34	2
<b>Forbidding Clear Cutting for any reason</b>	<b>49</b>	44	7

4. Voluntary Comments were asked as the second question. These comments helped to clarify WHY residents gave the ratings that they did. A brief sampling of comments in key areas are given below:
  - a. **TREES:** “The beauty of the Forest make me sigh ‘ahh’ every time I enter the Town”; “Don’t let people cut down dozens of tree at once”; “Too many trees are disappearing”; We should encourage new homeowners to invest in slow growing long lived trees and native plants”; “We used to be a forest. That is disappearing quickly”; Our beautiful hardwood trees are dying from ivy growing on them”; “...allowing more clearing and bigger square footage...makes us no different than many other communities”
  - b. **WALKING:** “If you’re not going to cut back foliage to make driving and walking safer, stop saying you will!”; “It would be nice to have a walking path in Town”; “There have been times I have been almost pushed off the road or hit by cars AND cyclists”; “I wish there were sidewalks”; “...encroachment of vegetation along the roadside makes certain shoulders impossible”; “Roads need to be safer for autos, bicyclists and pedestrians by clearing side easements...this is a dangerous situation at present for which the Town is liable”.
  - c. **SPEED:** “I feel there are people who drive too quickly on Eastwood and I have been almost hit...”; “Why was digital speed monitor taken down at Chauncey Circle and Niagara?...you sure as hell can afford to leave it there permanently!”; Some residents and golf course users drive too fast and aggressively”; “Speeding needs attention”, “I continue to see idiots towing their horse trailers driving at 40mph on their way to the equestrian center”.
  - d. **PARKS/PUBLIC SPACES:** “Much of the public areas of BF look tired...and unkept. A concerted effort is needed to get us back to the preeminent neighborhood of Asheville”; “Need to invest in Parks and in saving the Hemlocks”; “We should have updated playgrounds, nicer parks and landscaping, benches, and a town sign!”; “I would like to see more Park improvements at some point”; “I wish the parks were cleaned up regularly”; “We need a dog park”; “The parks are shabby and many of the residents don’t keep their yards groomed – giving the Town an unkept look”.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

1. Biltmore Forest has maintained an extremely high satisfaction rating and many residents state that they are proud to live here.
2. Police and Public Works both received an exemplary rating, with strong positive comments from residents for the Police, Public Works, and Administration for their friendliness and efforts.
3. The areas of Walking Safety, Speed Management, Buffering Guidelines, Consistent Enforcement of Zoning Ordinances, and Plans to Guide Future Development were all rated significantly lower than the average.
4. Voluntary Comments on **Walking** tended to focus on desire for walking trails and clearing hazardous right of way plantings.
5. Voluntary Comments on **Speed** were not specific other than the need to control it better
6. Whereas the rating for **Protecting the Tree Canopy** was average, there were a significant number of comments about the need to replace trees, prevent clear cutting, and manage ivy invasion. This appears to be a case where people LIKE the forest (hence the higher rating) but don’t want to lose it (negative voluntary comments)
7. Similarly, whereas the rating of the **Parks** was average, there were again significant comments about them looking shabby and needing updating. I believe the rationale is similar to the Trees rating.

Submitted 29 Dec 2021 for the Planning Commission: Toya Hauf, Dawn Grohs, Michael Flynn, Ken Hornowski, and Karen Cragolin.



Paul Zimmerman  
Planning Commission Chair